



# Islamabad POST

Saturday, June 03, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**No cease-fire in Ukraine sans Russia withdrawal**

Detailed News On Page-07

**NATO chief heads to Turkiye next week**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Naseem Shah returns to Leicestershire**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Briefs**

**Ex-Punjab CM Buzdar quit politics**

DNA



QUETTA: Former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar Friday became the latest Pakistani leader to quit politics in the aftermath of the May 9 violent riots. "First of all, I condemn the May 9 incidents. The military installations which were targeted were properties of the state of Pakistan and I believe we should avoid such incidents," Buzdar told journalists during a press conference in Lahore. Buzdar, whose term as Punjab's chief minister was cut short in March 2022, said he had always stood with the armed forces of Pakistan and will continue to do so. "I have always committed to politics of nobility [...] but due to the current circumstances, I have decided to quit politics," the former chief minister, once considered to be close to PTI Chairman Imran Khan, said. The former chief minister called on all stakeholders to reach a consensus and asked the authorities to release all those who were innocent from jail.

**Sherry calls for climate action**

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman has asked big businesses to contribute to transformational change for Climate Action. Speaking at "Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit 2023", she said that without their active role in the transformative initiatives, the world will continue to experience escalating temperatures. Sherry Rehman said that there is a pressing need for concrete and comprehensive action to address the pervasive issue of climate change. She said it is important to foster a continuous dialogue and understanding between governments, businesses, and other stakeholders to ensure meaningful progress.

**Holiday Notice**

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

- Editor

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Mariyam, German envoy mull cooperation in film, art - Page 08

**Arrives in Turkiye**

## PM Shehbaz wants relief for the poor

Directs for preparing export-oriented development budget 2023-24

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday issued clear directions to include on priority, such projects in the upcoming development budget that help in ensuring import substitutions, expanding export volume, and bringing innovation in various sectors. The prime minister also directed to allocate special funds in the development programme for the welfare and development of the country's youth. Chairing a meeting to review the budget proposals with respect to the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2023-24, Shehbaz Sharif said that in the upcoming

**Picture on Page 7**

budget, projects relating to higher education, professional training and job creation for the youth must be added in the programme. He also asked for the establishment of Pakistan Endowment Fund to provide higher education to the youth. The laptop programme should also be included in the upcoming PSDP to distribute free laptops among the top performing students to equip them with modern technology skills, he added. He said through the endowment fund, the youth should be given professional and higher education besides skill-based training in IT sector. The prime minister also stressed the need to give special importance to merit and

Continued on Page 06

## PTI's offer only for 'real decision-makers'

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PTI leader Hammad Azhar has said that his party's offer for negotiations was only extended to the "real decision-makers" and not "puppets". In a tweet, he said: "We don't want to waste time negotiating with puppets. These are imposed people who have no vote bank and are hiding behind crutches." "For the sake of restoration of the constitution and democracy, negotiations have been offered only with the real decision-makers," Azhar added. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had on Tuesday rejected outright Imran Khan's offer to hold talks in the backdrop of May 9 riots and violent protests staged by the PTI. Rejecting the option of negotiations with Mr Khan's party, PM said those who were involved in destroying public and private property on May 9 should be held accountable for their anti-state actions.

Continued on Page 06

## Imran to file suit against NAB chief

Says arrest warrant kept in secrecy for 8 days

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has filed a Rs 15 billion defamation suit, against Chairman NAB and served him legal notice for issuing arrest warrant on a public holiday and keeping in secrecy for eight days. PTI Chairman said that he was unlawfully detained from Islamabad High Court's premises with the ulterior motive to defame him and showed the world that he was arrested on corruption charges. Imran Khan pleaded: "My arrest warrant was issued on a public holiday and was kept in secrecy for eight days and I was not informed about conversion of Al-Qadir Trust Case Inquiry into Investigation." He stated that the conditions stipulated in Sec 24 of NAB Ordinance were disregarded, adding that Supreme Court held that manner and execution of his arrest warrant was unlawful and unconstitutional, as Pakistan Rangers was used which subjected him to brute force to execute arrest warrant. PTI Chairman stated the sole purpose to arrest in such way to tarnish his image globally because he was collecting Rs 10 billion in charity annually.

Continued on Page 06

## Elahi re-arrested soon after release

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Parvez Elahi was arrested again on Friday minutes after a Lahore court ordered to release him in an embezzlement case. The PTI leader has been re-arrested in a corruption case registered against him in Gujranwala by Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Punjab. The former Punjab chief minister was arrested a day earlier in connection with a case involving Rs70 million in corruption in development funds allocated for the Gujrat district. Judicial Magistrate Ghulam Murtaza Virk issued the release orders while announcing the verdict he had reserved on ACE's plea seeking Elahi's 14-day physical remand. "Parvez Elahi should be released if he is not required in any other criminal case," the verdict stated.

Continued on Page 06

## Justice Isa refutes rumours of division within SC ranks

The footage circulating on social media platforms cast an impression that the senior puisne judge did not greet the CJP during the event



NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Brushing aside rumours about division within ranks of the top judiciary, Supreme Court senior puisne judge Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Friday clarified that it was "factually incorrect" that he had internally created a separate group within the top court. Justice Isa made the

remarks while clarifying a false impression cast by a video clip from the oath-taking ceremony of the chief justice of the Federal Shariat Court held a day earlier. The footage circulating on social media platforms cast an impression that the senior puisne judge did not greet the CJP during the event. In a statement, Justice Isa said: "Immediately after the conclusion of the ceremony I went first to greet and I congratulate his wife where I met Justice Umar Ata Bandial and greeted him too." He went on to say that then he proceeded to greet Justice Rahman and later he went to talk to Dr Syed Muhammad Anwer, a former Aalim judge of the FSC, when Justice Bandial came to greet him too. "Someone recorded this moment, and incorrectly added that I had not greeted Justice Bandial, even though just a few minutes earlier I had done so," he added. Justice Isa added, "Justice Rahman's wife wanted to introduce me to some of her family members, which was the reason I turned." The senior puisne judge said that erroneous interpretations have appeared in the media and requested that

Continued on Page 06

**NATIONAL DAY OF ITALY CELEBRATED**



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Khawaja Muhammad Asif Defence Minister, Governor Punjab Balighur Rehma, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Zahid Akram, Minister for Defence Production Israr Tareen, Mushahid Hussain Syed and Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Italy. - DNA

**2 terrorists killed in N. Waziristan**  
Killed terrorists were actively involved in terrorist activities

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Fire exchange took place between terrorists and security forces in general area Dossali, North Waziristan District. According to an ISPR statement, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location and sealed all possible escape routes. During the ensuing fire exchange, two terrorists were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and killing of innocent citizens. Sanitization of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the area. Earlier this week, at least two terrorists were killed in an Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) launched by security forces in general area Dossali of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district on reported presence of militants on Wednesday, the military said. During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange occurred between security forces and terrorists, resulting in killing of two terrorists, the ISPR said in a statement. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and killing of innocent citizens.

## Pakistan greatly values ties with Italy, says Asif

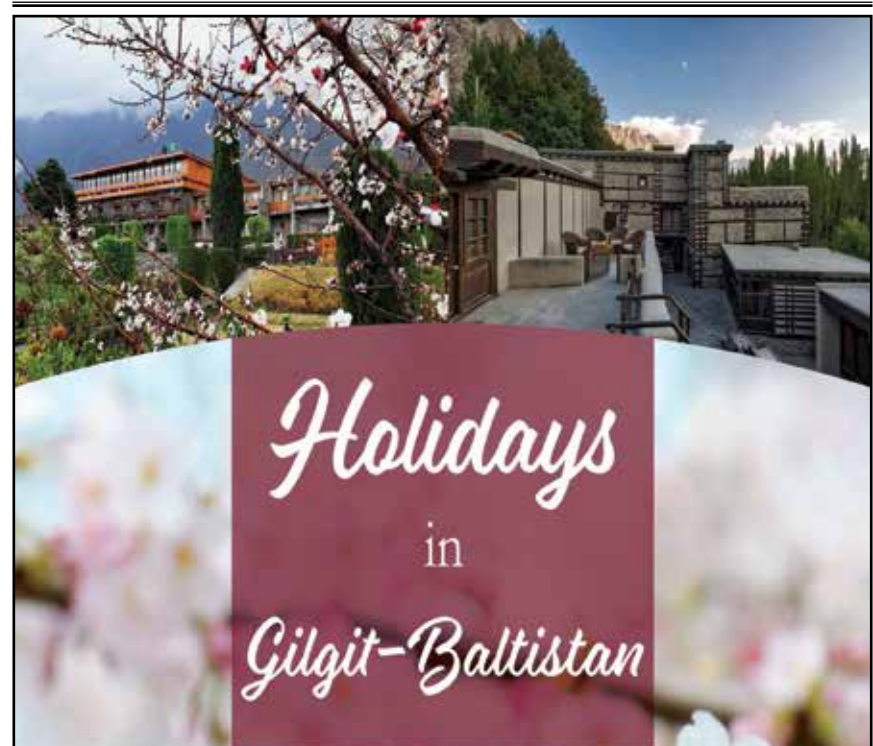
Italy remains among top ten exporting countries for Pakistan in the world, says Ambassador Andreas on the occasion of National Day of Italy

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said both Pakistan and Italy enjoy excellent relations adding this relationship is poised to grow more in the coming days. The Defence Minister expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of the occasion of 77th anniversary of the Republic Day, National Day of Italy. A large number of MPs, members of the civil society, media persons and civil and military officials attended the reception. The Defence Minister further said Italy was an important county in the European Union and had always supported Pakistan be it GSP plus or any other issue. He said Pakistan duly recognize Italian goodwill gesture. Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Andreas

Ferrarese in his speech said that our co-operation encompasses, but is not limited to political, economic, cultural and social spheres. Italy values the vital support and continued cooperation that Pakistan extended to the international community. He said, worker remittances from Italy to Pakistan have been at an all-time high in the past two years (more than 1 billion Euro a year). Italy was the seventh largest source of worker remittances to Pakistan globally, and the top one within the EU countries. Both countries appreciate the importance of people-to-people contacts that foster bilateral ties. The Embassy is strongly committed to improve consular services. While talking about the joint commission he said, the fifth Italy-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission (JEC)

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## PTI female workers deny any abuse in jail

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) female workers who were arrested in the arson case have denied any abuse in the jail. Talking to the media after appearing in an anti-terrorism court on Friday, they said that they were not meted out any mistreatment in jail. Sanam Javed said that it was a great injustice to keep them in jail. Her mother told media that she had seen good arrangements in jail. "I am ashamed at the statements of my daughter." Aliya Hamza said that they were being made a victim of political revenge. Meanwhile, the anti-terrorism court extended the judicial remand of seven PTI female workers for a week. Earlier, they were produced in court. The court summoned the record of the identification parade and the investigation officer. On the other hand, the Lahore High Court adjourned the bail plea of Khadija Shah until June 12.

## Workers are the backbone of economy

ISLAMABAD: The Minister for Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi chaired the "Performance Review Meeting of WWF". According to a press release issued here on Friday, Workers Welfare Fund officials attended the meeting. Mr. Turi emphasised on expediting the development projects currently in the pipeline spread all over Pakistan. "Management of WWF to lay special focus on Workers Welfare activities especially with reference to scholarships, death & marriage grants besides creation of better facilities for workers facilitation in terms of their living and access to basic facilities of life," he directed. The Minister was of the view that the time was ripe Workers Welfare Fund emphasised on projecting the major accomplishments made for ease of workers by Workers Welfare Fund through better use of both electronic and print media. The Minister was of the view that performance review of Workers Welfare Fund developmental projects, education and other welfare would be a regular feature so that improvement in these areas could be made for better facilitation of the workers.

## Rupee sheds 29 paisas against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee witnessed 29 paisas devaluation against the US Dollar (USD) in the interbank trading on Friday as it closed at Rs 285.67 against the previous day's closing of Rs 285.38. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs299 and Rs302, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 2.86 to close at Rs 307.53 against the last day's closing of Rs304.67, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained went up by 01 paisa closed at Rs2.05, whereas an increase of Rs3.15 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound.

## May 9 vandalism negates PTI claims of political tolerance

PESHAWAR: Besides the negative socioeconomic and psychological effects, the May 9-10 vandalism have also negated the tall claims of PTI of supporting democratic values, reconciliation and political tolerance in society. The ransacking of public and private properties have widened the gaps between Pakistan Tahrir e Insaf and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and has split PTI into different groups. "A red line has been drawn between the supporters of democracy and attackers of the government and defence installations after May 9 vandalism and its negative effects would continue to haunt PTI for many years," said Professor Dr A H Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP on Friday. He said attacks on defense instal-



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, Mohsin Naqvi presiding 16th session of provincial cabinet.— DNA

## Ambassador-designate stresses steps to boost trade with Denmark

Vice President Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli offered vote of thanks while SVP Dr. Sajjad Arshad presented FCCI memento to Shoaib Sarwar. The designated ambassador also recorded his impressions in the FCCI visitor's book

DNA

FAISALABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Denmark Shoaib Sarwar said on Friday that extraordinary steps would have to be taken in consultation with the business community to attract maximum foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhance trade with the country of his appointment. Addressing the business community at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he acknowledged the economic strength of Faisalabad, particularly in the field of textile, and said it was strange that only one firm was included among the top 50 exporting companies to Denmark. He said probably the FCCI members had not focused on this small country, which was in-

cluded among the most developed and economically strong countries with maximum purchasing power. He motivated the exporters to exploit the Danish potential in addition to re-exporting their products to the EU countries. He proposed that an FCCI trade delegation should visit Denmark so that tangible steps could be taken to deepen the footprints of Pakistani textile there. He promised the best possible support and facilitation to the serious exporters intending to enter that market. He also underlined the importance of E-commerce and said that many countries were purchasing cheap Pakistani products and selling those under their own brand names at hefty profit. He said that Pakistani exporters should also utilise the platform of Amazon to have direct access to the global

buyers. He promised zoom meetings with the Danish buyers so that Pakistani exporters could avail the untapped markets. Earlier, FCCI President Dr Khuram Tariq welcomed Shoaib Sarwar and introduced Faisalabad and its business community. He said the FCCI was a half century old institution advocating for the business community of this agro industrial city. He said that it has 8,500 members, who belong to 118 sectors and subsectors of trade and industry. He said that Faisalabad has one of the largest industrial estates which is most suitable for joint ventures in addition to attracting foreign investment along with technology transfer. He said that Denmark is relatively a small country but it has a strong economy with specialisation in dairy and renewable energy sectors. He said

that although Pakistani exports to Denmark are minimal. "Out of 50 top Pakistani exporters, 50pc belong to Faisalabad," he added. Former president FCCI Mian Javed Iqbal said that Denmark had the best universities and "we must try to get maximum educational scholarships for our students". He said: "Pakistan has been blessed with human resources and we must try to equip them with the latest skills and technology." He particularly identified IT and artificial intelligence where our youth could outperform if provided with adequate opportunities and a conducive environment. Madam Naheed Akhtar, Director TDAP Faisalabad, said Pakistani exporters could have B2B meetings with their Danish counterparts with the courtesy of the Pakistani em-

bassy through zoom meetings. Senior Vice President FCCI Dr. Sajjad Arshad said that Denmark has a well developed tourism sector and we should also avail from their experience and expertise in this segment. Former presidents Ayub Sabir, Mian Muhammad Shafique, Executive Members Muhammad Azhar Chaudhry, Ghulam Hussain, Mian Tayyab, Faisal Ali, Shafique Hussain Shah, former executive member Sheikh Muhammad Fazil, Haji Muhammad Abid and Noman Malik participated in the question answer session. Vice President Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli offered vote of thanks while SVP Dr. Sajjad Arshad presented FCCI memento to Shoaib Sarwar. The designated ambassador also recorded his impressions in the FCCI visitor's book.

## Sindh to initiate action against water theft

KARACHI: Chief Secretary Sindh, Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput on Friday chaired a high-level meeting regarding the illegal encroachments and water theft in Karachi and decided to take stringent measures to tackle these unlawful activities. The meeting was attended by Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Minister for Local Government, Muhammad Iqbal Memon, Commissioner Karachi, Baqaullah Unar, Senior Member, Board of Revenue, Syed Najam Ahmed Shah, Secretary Local Government, officials from the Malir Development Authority, Karachi Development Authority, Water Board Police, and Rangers. The reports of encroachments on the lands of the Malir Development Authority (MDA), Karachi Devel-

opment Authority (KDA), and the Water Board were presented. Briefing the meeting, the officials said that the lands of MDA, KDA and Lyari Development Authority (LDA) had been illegally occupied in different city areas and at different times. They informed that they had also carried out various operations but encroachments resurfaced. Addressing the meeting, the chief secretary said that a strong operation would be carried out against encroachments and water thieves in the city of Karachi. "An operation will be conducted against illegal hydrants in the East and West districts of the city," he said. If illegal hydrants were reactivated, strict action would be taken against the SHOs (Station House Officers) concerned, he added. Furthermore, Dr

Muhammad Sohail Rajput, emphasized that the police and Rangers would actively participate in the operation against encroachments and illegal hydrants alongside the district administration. He also announced the provision of the necessary equipment to the Anti-Encroachment Force to tackle any resistance they may face. Speaking at the meeting, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Minister of Local Government, stated that the operation against illegal encroachments would be conducted without any discrimination. He highlighted that the maximum amount of water theft was taking place in the East and West districts. The budget for the Anti-Encroachment Force had been increased, and additional staff and powers would be granted to them, Shah mentioned.—APP

## DG LDA orders strict action against defaulters

LAHORE: Commissioner Lahore and Director General (DG) Lahore Development Authority (LDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa chaired a meeting here on Friday to discuss resources generation of the Authority. The director finance gave a briefing on the revenue target of all departments, saying that due to effective monitoring, there had been a significant improvement in generation of the revenue in the last 2 months. The DG LDA directed the officers concerned to take strict action against commercialisation fee defaulters. He said all departments should achieve their targets before end of the current financial year. He said that progress on achievement of the target would be reviewed on weekly basis. The Metropolitan Planning Wing and Town Planning Wing would present their progress report about their remaining targets on daily basis. Chief Engineer Israr Saeed, Additional DG Housing Captain (ret'd) Shahmeer Iqbal, Additional DG (UP) Syed Munawar Bukhari, Chief Metropolitan Planning Nadeem Akhtar Zaidi, Director Admin and Director Housing X Rabil Butt attended the meeting.—APP

## Punjab Bar Council lawyers call on Law Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of lawyers from Punjab Bar Council led by Basharat Ullah Khan (Vice Chairman Punjab Bar Council) and Tahir Shabir Chaudhry (Chairman Executive Committee Punjab Bar Council) along with honorable members of Punjab Bar Council called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tatar on Friday. Issues of mutual interests and the matters regarding Grant in aid were discussed. The honourable Minister shared his views regarding the importance of Bar Councils as an integral part of our legal justice system. The delegation informed the Minister about various issues faced by the Bar and the Minister assured his utmost support to resolve these. The Minister expressed that it is important to have a liaison between Govt and Bars and there should not be a disconnection which is why Lawyers protection Act holds great importance. The participants of the meeting appreciated the efforts of the Law Minister for the passage of Lawyer's protection Act which was a long standing demand of lawyers across Pakistan

## UK Health Security Agency team visits Institute of Public Health

LAHORE: The UK Health Security Agency mission, during its Pakistan tour, paid a visit to the Institute of Public Health (IPH), here on Friday. According to sources, the mission members had a detailed discussion with Dean Professor Dr Zarfishan Tahir and her technical team about creating a robust system using modern information technology in terms of disease prevention, detection and response. Dr. Zarfishan said Pakistan is a signatory to the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 under which it is prime responsibility of the country to strengthen various technical areas of the health sector. She said capacity building of the staff should be done on modern lines while a comprehensive strategy to prevent, detect and respond should be adopted with reference to diseases and prevention of spread of epidemics in a timely manner. She said that the Health Security Agency of the UK was providing technical assistance to Pakistani institutions to strengthen the public health sector. Dr. Mohammad Sartaj, country head UK Agency, said the Health Security Agency would provide technical support to the IPH experts in environmental epidemiology and e-learning programmes. The mission had a detailed discussion with the technical team of the IPH about the training programme, IT solutions. The UK mission would also support the training and capacity building of IPH's public health experts and technical staff. Dr Zarfishan briefed the UK Mission about the IPH educational and training programme and the activities regarding prevention and control of diseases in the province. The UK-HSA mission consisted of Dr. Mohammad Sartaj, Dr. Paul Clearly, Subject Specialist IT Based Interventions and Miss Chole Byer, Subject Specialist Surveillance, Outbreak and Investigations. Director Health CDC Dr Yaddullah and Punjab Health Advisor UK-HSA Dr Saeed Akhtar were also present on this occasion.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

- June 02/Italy  
National/ Independence Day
- June 04/Finland  
Armed Forces Day May 06/UAE
- June 06/Sweden  
National Day
- June 10/Portugal  
Portugal Day (National Day)
- June 10/Jordan  
Arab Revolution & Army Day
- June 11/United Kingdom  
Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth
- June 12/Philippines  
Independence Day
- June 12/Russian Federation  
Day of Sovereignty of the Russian
- June 13/Zambia  
Armed Forces day
- June 17/Iceland  
National Day
- June 18/Seychells  
National Day
- June 25/Croatia  
National Day
- June 25/Mozambique  
National Day
- June 26/Azerbaijan  
Army Day

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Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
Motorway Police...9266044  
Motorway Police.9270601-20  
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Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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WASA Rawalpindi.5555489  
CAA.....9281092



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MH.....561116  
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DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
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PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
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### Departments

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CDA.....9208301-04  
Met Office.....9250360-6  
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TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# PPP for extension in FATA, PATA tax exemption period

Faisal Kundi says that the PPP delegation, under the leadership of the provincial president, has visited the Radio Pakistan building in Peshawar which was attacked and burnt by the PTI workers

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Friday advocated the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) stance of supporting extension in the FATA/PATA tax exemption period considering the prevailing economic situation.

"PPP has a very clear stance with the government, federal cabinet and Finance Minister as a coalition partner to support the demand of the people of former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) for extension in the tax exemption period", he said.

Speaking during a press conference along with PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial President, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, the SAPM said that tax exemption was given to FATA/PATA at the time of merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa keeping in view the economic situation, which is extendable. Faisal Kundi said that the PPP delegation, under the leadership of the provincial president, has visited the Radio Pakistan building in Peshawar which was attacked and burnt by the PTI workers.

He condemned the workers of PTI who ransacked and set on fire the public and private properties including Radio Pakistan's building and stolen computers, electronic appliances, furniture, sound system, vehicles engines



and other expensive items. He said that attack on the government and defense installations was a preplanned conspiracy by the PTI and demanded strict legal action against the miscreants involved in all such activities. Faisal Kundi said that those who

sold the gate of Radio Pakistan building for Rs. 9,00,000 were saying that they entered into politics against the thieves and dacoits". Commenting on the prevailing situation when PTI leaders are quitting party and from positions, Faisal Kundi said that may be people will see an advertisement from PTI soon seeking leaders. Faisal Kundi said that a number of PTI leaders including the prominent ones have contacted PPP to join the party however the PPP will welcome those who pursued politics of morality and obeyed the constitutional values. While "Entry is closed for those violating these basic principles of politics", he said. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Water Resources, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha congratulated Ma-

lik Jawad Hussain for joining PPP and said that PPP had always given respect to its workers and we all will serve this country together. The state minister hoped that the government would grant extension in the tax exemption for FATA/PATA which was granted in the year 2018 at the time of merger of these areas into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through executive orders. He criticized the former PTI government for bad governance and unprecedented corruption in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during its last around ten years tenure. Faisal Kundi congratulated former MNA, Malik Jawad Hussain, NA 47 Orakzai Agency on joining PPP, on the behalf of the President PPP, Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and other party members.

## PM's measures to curb illegal tobacco trade hailed

ISLAMABAD: The health activists Friday appreciated Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's directives to curb down illegal trade of tobacco products in the country. In a press release of the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), they mentioned that Federal Board of Revenue's Track and Trace system controlled illicit trade from going above 15% level. The health activist suggested to implement the system in all companies to achieve further benefits.

They also mentioned that during pre-budget seasons, tobacco industry used blown up percentage of illicit trade to influence the policymakers from raising taxation according to the rate of inflation.

Malik Imran, country head, Campaign for tobacco-free kids (CTFK), mentioned that tobacco induced disease caused an annual economic burden of Rs 615 billion which is 1.6% of Pakistan's GDP. He said that an industry which was causing such unprecedented level of damage to public health and economy, brazenly claimed that any damage control move was against Pakistan's interest.

Imran mentioned that every budget season, tobacco industry used the illicit trade excuse to ensure that tobacco taxes were not increased. This is a cover used by tobacco industry to divert people from the under-reporting. These companies under-report their production and then sell their non-reported products in the illicit market, causing billions of loss to the national exchequer. He quoted findings of a latest research on illicit cigarette Pakistan which revealed the percentage of illicit packs of cigarette was around 15 percent. Imran said that tobacco industry should not have any problems paying additional taxes as it never paid them from its own coffers. Tobacco companies have increased their net-of-tax prices. Due to over-shifting, the excise tax share in retail price remains at 51.6%, lower than the widely-accepted benchmark of 70%. Dr. Ziauddin Islam, Former Technical Head, Tobacco Control Cell, Ministry of Health, said that tobacco was the largest silent killer in the country as above 170,000 people died due to its use each year. —APP

# MoU between (NIMA) & Pakistan House signed



ISLAMABAD: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) and the Pakistan House, Islamabad on 26 May 23 at NIMA Head Office at Bahria University, Islamabad. The documents were duly endorsed with the signatures of Vice Admiral (Retd) Ahmed Saeed HI(M), DG NIMA, and Muhammad Athar Javed, DG Pakistan House, Islamabad.

By signing the MoU, the two parties agreed to establish a formal mechanism of collaboration and cooperation for new initiatives, i.e., establishing Green Ship Recycling Industry in Pakistan. The purpose of the agreement is to improve the research and academic activities between the two institutions and to promote quality research. The agreement will not only foster bilateral collaboration but will also help in synergizing joint activities related to maritime affairs of Pakistan. On the occasion, DG NIMA assured wholehearted support to Pakistan House, in conduct of research, policy analysis, and other related subjects. DG Pakistan House also hoped that this partnership will be a catalyst in getting benefit from each other's experience. —DNA

## Hashoo Foundation, INU inks MoU

ISLAMABAD: The Hashoo Foundation in order to foster academia-industry linkages and strengthen the concept of using knowledge as a resource, has signed an MoU with Iqra National University (INU).

"Through this partnership both organizations will be working closely to benefit students, enhancing their professional skills and knowledge," said a news release issued here on Friday. Country Director of Hashoo Foundation, Ayesha Khan, and Vice Chancellor (VC) of Iqra National University Prof. Dr Shah Jahan signed the agreement in the presence of senior officials from both organizations. —APP

## Call for collective responsibility to prioritize mental health

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a workshop stressed the need for collective responsibility and determination to prioritize mental health as a fundamental human rights concern. Over 700,000 people worldwide take their own life each year by suicide, according to statistics reported by the World Health Organization (WHO). These figures were shared by Dr Fayaz Amir, a mental health expert during a workshop held at the University of Chitral the other day in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

(KP). The consultative workshop brought together representatives from various organizations and departments to address the critical issue of mental health in our society. Dr Fayaz Amir delivered a comprehensive presentation on the causes of suicide. Another mental health expert Dr Amir presented the findings of a study conducted by Peshawar University, which reported 176 cases of suicide in Chitral between 2013 and 2019. Zahid Rehan Niazi, Regional Director of the Ministry of Human Rights in Peshawar, provided an

overview of the aims and objectives of the workshop, highlighting the importance of raising awareness and formulating effective strategies to protect mental health as a fundamental human right. Nasar Khan, a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, University of Chitral, conducted another technical session focusing on the role of academia in preventing suicide. He shed light on the responsibilities of educational institutions and shared insights on how academia can contribute to suicide prevention efforts. Addressing the social aspects of suicide, Niaz A.

Niazi, a prominent human rights activist from Chitral, presented various suggestions aimed at preventing suicide among youth. He highlighted that while mental disorders can contribute to suicidal tendencies, there are several social issues that act as triggers. The religious perspective on suicide was presented by Fazal Maula, District Khateeb of Chitral, and Khaliq U Zaman, Khateeb Shahi Masjid Chitral. They underscored that suicide is strictly prohibited in Islam and provided insights into Islamic teachings and principles related to mental well-being. —APP

## Academia-Industry linkages to be strengthened

ISLAMABAD: To foster academia-industry linkages and strengthen the concept of using knowledge as resource, Hashoo Foundation has signed an MoU with Iqra National University. Through this partnership both organizations will be working closely to benefit students, enhancing their professional skills and knowledge. Ms. Ayesha Khan, Country Director, Hashoo Foundation and Prof. Dr. Shah Jahan, Vice Chancellor Iqra National University signed the agreement in the presence of senior officials from both organizations. Ms. Ayesha Khan, Country Director Hashoo Foundation, said that we believe in the power of learning and using knowledge to produce actionable input for the betterment of individuals and communities. Hashoo Foundation has always impacted the lives of youth by providing them with opportunities of capacity building, career development, and education. The more organizations collaborate for youth development, the greater outreach and impact for national sustainable development priorities can be achieved. —DNA

# Ethiopia appreciated the efforts of President ICCI

## DNA

ISLAMABAD The Government of Ethiopia has appreciated the efforts of President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce for improving relations between the two countries and for starting direct flight operations. Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jamal Baker Abdullah presented the shield of honor on behalf of his government during his visit to Islamabad Chamber yesterday. On this occasion, the Ambassador of Ethiopia said that his government appreciates the efforts of President Islamabad Chamber. President Islamabad Chamber has rendered valuable services for the strengthening of relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia and especially for the improvement of trade relations. This year, the delegation's visit to Ethiopia under the leadership of President Islamabad Chamber

laid the foundation for efforts to take the relations between the two countries to new heights. He said that steps are being taken by both sides to further improve trade relations between Pakistan

and Ethiopia. We hope that Pakistan and Ethiopia will be the best trade partners in the next few years, he said that we are trying to make Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto vis-

it Ethiopia soon. In this regard, the embassy is playing its role, he said that the restoration of direct flight operation between Pakistan and Ethiopia is a great opportunity for the business

community of both countries, I hope this opportunity will be fully utilized.

Speaking on this occasion, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that I am deeply grateful to the Ethiopian government, and ambassador for acknowledging our efforts to improve the relations between the two countries. In fact, it is an honor for the entire Islamabad Chamber and the business community that our efforts have been recognized at the government level. He said that Ethiopia is very important for Pakistan in Africa. In the last one year, due to the efforts of Islamabad Chamber, the relations between the two countries and the interest of the business community in each other have increased enormously. He said that I hope that our efforts will yield substantial results. He said that Ethiopia should play its role to give observer status to Paki-

stan in the African Union. He said that the PTA trade agreement between the two countries is necessary so that the volume of trade can increase. Speaking on the occasion, Vice President Chamber Engr Azharul Islam said that Ethiopia can prove to be the best market for Pakistan. The hospitality shown on the occasion of the Islamabad Chamber delegation's visit this year is commendable, it is hoped that this warmth will translate into better business relations.

On this occasion, the Ethiopian Ambassador acknowledged United Business Group Pakistan Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari for his valuable services for the improvement of Pakistan-Ethiopia relations. On this occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari said that Ethiopia is the most important country in Africa with one and a half billion population. Ethiopian Airlines direct flights will give Pakistan access to the whole Africa.





## Briefs

## Nuclear power is not as important as economic power

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Brig. (ret'd) Aslam Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), said on Friday that the world has changed. Now, becoming an economic power has become more important than becoming a nuclear power.

We also have to use all our abilities to promote the economy; otherwise, the country will end up bankrupt, he said.

In a statement issued here today, Aslam Khan said that we have always tried to compete with the military power of enemy countries. We also tested nuclear bombs despite international pressure when India carried out nuclear explosions. Pakistan has always focused on competing with India in military capabilities, but we have never tried to compete with them in economic or human development, he observed. Now, India has become the fifth-largest economic power in the world, while Pakistan has been running around the world for eight months for a billion dollars to avoid bankruptcy.

## Weekly inflation increases nominally by 0.03%

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a nominal increase of 0.03 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on June 1st, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 254.13 points as compared to 254.05 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 42.67 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732, however decreased by 0.06 per cent and went down to 260.57 points from last week's 260.77 points whereas it decreased by 0.10 per cent for consumption group from Rs 17,732-22,888. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.08 per cent, 0.12 per cent and 0.05 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 19 (37.25%) items increased, 14 (27.45%) items decreased and 18 (35.30%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included LPG (4.46%), wheat flour (4.06%), bananas (4.04%), petrol (2.96%), eggs (2.57%), diesel (1.94%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (1.87%), mustard oil (1.57%), cooking oil 5 litre (1.35%), pulse moong (1.27%) and vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (1.06%).—APP

## Provincial Minister visits parks

RAWALPINDI: Caretaker Punjab Provincial Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Syed Azfar Ali Nasir here on Friday visited Rawal and Allama Iqbal parks and reviewed ongoing beautification projects.

Director General (DG) Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi, Ahmed Hasan Ranjha and other PHA officers were also present on the occasion. During the visit, the DG briefed the Minister about ongoing projects. The Minister appreciated the performance of the PHA officers and issued instructions to further improve condition of the parks. Syed Azfar Ali during the visit also directed the authorities to build more washrooms in the parks to provide basic facilities to the public. The Minister visited the control room in both the parks.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Students of Islamabad college for girls F6/2 pose for group photo with chief guest president Islamabad Chamber of commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari Principal Prof Sabah faisal in launching ceremony of Entrepreneurs program for students held on Friday. — DNA

## Call to recognize gaming as a separate industry

The speakers highlighted the need for public-private partnerships to address industry gaps, positioning Pakistan as a major player in the global gaming market and reaping economic benefits

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A round table discussion on "Gaming as an Export Industry: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan" was organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) Islamabad. The keynote address was delivered by Ahsan Farooq (Head, Cybersecurity Program IRS), Dr. Hameed-ur-Rehman (Associate Professor, Department of Computer Game Development, Air University), Mr. Abdul Salam (Founder & CEO, 9D Technologies), and Ms. Kashoon Leeza (Policy Advocacy Lead P@SHA). Among the speakers, three discussants, Mr. Bilal (General Manager, IGNITE National Technology Fund), Zunera Jalil (Professor and Chair, Department of Cyber Security, Air University), and Al-eem Abbas (Skills Development

and Training Lead, P@SHA), also joined the panel. Members of the think tanks, ambassadors from foreign offices, research scholars, and corporate representatives were among those present. During the discussion, speakers emphasized the gaming industry's immense revenue-generating potential and the importance of recognizing it as a separate industry, distinct from IT. They proposed specialized education programs, university curricula, and youth encouragement to pursue gaming careers. The speakers highlighted the need for public-private partnerships to address industry gaps, positioning Pakistan as a major player in the global gaming market and reaping economic benefits.

Mr. Ahsan Farooq during his introductory remarks emphasized the exponential growth of Pakistan's gaming sector, which has

evolved into a thriving export industry. In 2022, the industry generated \$171.30 million in revenue, with projections suggesting it will exceed \$200 million in 2023. Mr. Farooq stressed the importance of strategic investment in human resources and skills development to capitalize on these opportunities. With a young population of 64 percent, Pakistan has the potential to become a regional game development hub, requiring support from the government to nurture the industry's growth. Mr. Hameed-ur-Rehman acknowledged that only a few students currently consider gaming as a viable career option despite its immense potential. He highlighted ongoing efforts to raise awareness among youth about the opportunities in the gaming industry and enhance teaching methodologies to cultivate their interest in this field. The aim is to encourage more stu-

dents to explore gaming as a career path and tap into its potential for economic growth.

Mr. Abdul Salam acknowledged the existing skilled labor gap within the gaming industry and shared his concerns about the shortage of skilled workforce within his private company. Despite having the capacity and potential for team expansion, the challenge lies in finding qualified professionals. He emphasized the need for the education sector to produce a pool of talented individuals specifically trained in animation and gaming development to address this critical shortage of skilled resources. Ms. Kashoon Leeza highlighted that Pakistan boasts a significant gamer base of 80 million users. However, she pointed out the absence of specific policies catering to IT sub-sectors, as the current 26 policies are implemented across the entire IT sector. She

further mentioned the lack of a streamlined one-window operation, which hampers foreign funding opportunities, despite Pakistan offering 100% ownership to direct investors.

Mr. Muhammad Bilal Abbasi emphasized the need for government intervention to address the gaps identified by the private sector, such as the scarcity of studios and space for game developers, as well as the absence of motion detection suits. He mentioned the government's efforts through initiatives like CEGA to bridge these gaps, allowing Pakistan to transform its small segment into a major player in the gaming and animation industry. Ultimately, the objective of IGNITE, the government's innovation arm, is to achieve economic prosperity through supporting and nurturing these sectors.

## Canal Extension Project likely to be completed soon

ISLAMABAD: Rapid construction work is going on Kachhi Canal Extension Project and is likely to be completed in the next few months. Upon completion, the project would irrigate another 30,000 acres of land in district Dera Bugti, sources told APP here. WAPDA is executing the project and after the completion of the extension, the command area of Kachhi Canal Phase-I will extend to 102,000 acres. They said construction work on 40-km main lined canal, allied structures and 32-Km water distribution system has already been completed except at a couple of sites, which was likely to be completed soon. Kachhi Canal is a significant project to alleviate poverty from backward and remote areas of Balochistan by developing irrigated agriculture and agro-based economy in the province.—APP

## Islamabad police recover 10kg heroin

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Tarnol police station has arrested a drug seller and recovered 10 kilogram heroin and 125 gram ice from his possession. According to police, a massive crackdown against drug suppliers is underway and effective action is being ensured against such anti-social elements. One of the team from Tarnol police station arrested an accused Imran and recovered 10 kilogram heroin and 125 gram ice from his possession. Case has been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. Police team is also raiding different hide-outs of the drug peddlers. Islamabad police officials have appreciated the performance of Tarnol police team and announced commendation certificates and cash rewards. They said that Islamabad Capital Police will not leave any stone unturned to curb the menace of drug.—APP

## Chinese giant strives to ease Pak power challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese giant will continue to strive easing Pakistan's power challenges, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. China Electric Power Equipment and Technology Co., Ltd. (CET) has made many viable plans in terms of CPEC and other issues to make the energy crisis in Pakistan a thing of the past through the implementation of them. When it comes to energy crisis, until 2017, it was believed that Pakistan's economy would be included in the twenty largest economies of the world in a few years. However, this has not happened yet-



energy crisis in Pakistan is the crucial factor. This crisis occurs again and again which causes severe damage especially to the power sector. Now the question arises: why this energy crisis occurs in Pakistan which particularly disturbs the power sector? Among a series of reasons, the most important point is that our power generation system does not match the electricity demand, and this mismatch keeps the electricity price high. In addition, Pa-

kistan's transmission lines are very old and dilapidated due to disrepair, making smooth power transmission impossible. In this process, a lot of electricity has been wasted. Although our systems generate electricity, the people cannot get it in time. As a result, the people in Pakistan have to suffer the punishment of load shedding while along with the same load shedding, they also have to pay heavy electricity bills. Thus, when the CPEC project was contemplated, the problems of the power sector were kept at the forefront. In this context, a series of big projects have been started, one of which has been completed by CET., the Matiari La-

hore Transmission Project. Through this project, it has been ensured that safety and reliability optimized energy distribution is an important factor in power transmission. Capacity of the project to transmit electricity is 35 billion KW hours per annum. The most important thing about this project is that it is the first high voltage direct current project in the history of Pakistan, as well as the first project of this kind of private sector in Pakistan, which is built on the principle of boot i.e., build own, operate and transfer. This project will be handed over to National Transmission and Dispatch Company Pakistan after 25 years.

## Chairperson Karim Afridi Foundation visits NUTECH



DNA


RAWALPINDI: Madam Christina, Chairperson Karim Khan Afridi Welfare Foundation visited NUTECH with the aim to establish a long-term partnership and explore avenues of collaboration with NUTECH. The delegation applauded the University's structure and vision to nurture future generations to fulfill industrial needs. They showed keen interest in future partnerships with NUTECH students in community service activities. This future alliance will benefit students and faculty in the form of professional learning and entrepreneurship ventures with new platforms.

## MUET team clinches second position


HYDERABAD: A three-member team of students of the Department of Telecommunication Engineering, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology Jamsoro has clinched second position in the recently concluded Huawei ICT Competition 2022-2023 in Shenzhen City of China. The university spokesman informed here on Friday that the Mariyam, Muhammad Faiz and Asad Anwar students of the 18th batch of the Department of Telecommunication Engineering participated in the networking track of the competition from May 24 to 28, 2023. The spokesman informed that a total of 146 teams of male and female students from 2,000 higher learning institutions of the world participated in the last leg of the international competition, among them the students' team of Mehran University clinched second position under the supervision of Dr Fahim Yar Khuahar.—APP

## IRSA releases 169,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 169,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 198,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.15 feet and was 28.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 61,300 cusecs and 60,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1128.20 feet, which was 78.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.—APP



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## Peace in Asia under threat

OUR militaries are operating and training together like never before to maintain peace, deter aggression and respond to crises," US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a joint news conference after his meeting with Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada in Tokyo on Thursday, a day ahead of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore where defense ministers of countries in the Asia-Pacific region are gathering to discuss ways to prevent confrontations and conflicts, and maintain peace and development.

That Austin accused China of "coercive behavior" and attempting "to undermine the rules-based international order" makes clear which country's aggression the United States and Japan are trying to deter. This is a typical case of the pot calling the kettle black, for the US has been instigating conflicts and "color revolutions" while claiming to help maintain peace and promote "democracy". Why else is the US trying to extend NATO eastward? The US has even led NATO to agree to open a liaison office in Tokyo in 2024. In early 2021, it also "resurrected" the Quad, a security dialogue among the US, Japan, Australia and India. And in September 2021, it struck the AUKUS security alliance with the United Kingdom and Australia to supply nuclear-powered submarines to Canberra. These security alliances and arrangements are open attempts to encircle China. Equally important, the US has been interfering in the Taiwan question and, in violation of the principles of the three joint communiques, it has been selling arms to the Chinese island apart from holding military exercises in the Western Pacific. These moves are a challenge to peace, not attempts to "maintain peace" as Austin claimed. Austin's speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, scheduled for Saturday, is titled "United States' Leadership in the Indo-Pacific". Perhaps the US equates "leadership" with "hegemony". In contrast, Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Li Shangfu's speech, scheduled for Sunday, is titled "China's New Security Initiative", which opposes the pursuit of one country's security at the cost of another's. The contrast in the two countries' approach to peace is clear.

In keeping with its peaceful coexistence diplomacy, China brokered peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia earlier this year, leading to the two Middle East countries re-establishing diplomatic ties after seven years. It is now trying to mediate peace between Russia and Ukraine in an effort to help end the Ukraine conflict. The US should be aware that strengthening alliances is one thing and interfering in the Taiwan question is another. As Li said in his talks with Singaporean Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen, the Taiwan question is of China's core interest and China will never compromise on its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The sooner the US understands this the better.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

## Europe needs Sánchez's gamble to pay off

SPAIN'S socialist prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, has a reputation for judicious risk-taking. In 2018, after orchestrating a vote of no confidence in the incumbent centre-right government, he was appointed prime minister despite the socialists having a mere 84 MPs in a 350-seat parliament. Mr Sánchez was not even a sitting deputy at the time. This July, progressives both inside and outside Spain must hope that the prime minister's gambling instincts will pay off once again. Following regional and municipal polls in which the centre-right Partido Popular (PP) had a field day, and the radical right Vox party doubled its share of the vote, Mr Sánchez has surprised Spain by calling a snap general election on 23 July, anticipating one due in December. This is a manoeuvre that Sir Humphrey in Yes Minister might describe as "brave". Mr Sánchez has acted swiftly, in part, to concentrate minds in his socialist-led coalition government, which has become increasingly divided and fractious. Amid splits over political tone and a row over a botched reform of sexual consent laws, his deputy prime minister, Yolanda Díaz, has formed a new leftwing alliance, Sumar, to rival Podemos, a junior coalition partner in the government. The two parties now have days to patch up differences and present a united front next month. Crucially, Mr Sánchez also hopes his gambit will act as a wake-up call to mainstream voters, as the radical right eyes a role in government for the first time since Spain's return to democracy. Since taking over last year, the PP's present leader, Alberto NúñezFeijóo, has successfully harvested votes by dragging his party back to the centre. But last year a PP-Vox administration was controversially formed in Castilla y León – the first time Vox had been allowed into regional government.

That means that Spain's summer election has important ramifications for Europe as a whole. An overwhelming majority of Spaniards have no desire to see Vox anywhere near power. But recent elections in Italy, Sweden and Finland indicate that authoritarian nationalists, intent on whipping up anti-immigrant sentiment, waging culture wars and rolling back rights for women and minorities, are becoming a feature, not a glitch, in western European politics. Despite its problems, Mr Sánchez's government has a positive economic story to tell, having weathered the energy crisis and inflationary pressures better than most. Relying on the parliamentary support of a hardline Basque nationalist party with historical links to the terror group ETA has proved deeply unpopular. But a snap election has now turned the spotlight on Vox. In the wake of last weekend's unexpectedly heavy defeats across Spain, Mr Sánchez has in effect told voters "be careful what you wish for". That was a gamble. It is very much in Europe's interests that it pays off.



## Gulf states test the boundaries of their agency

James Dorsey

The Emirati withdrawal follows Iran's recent seizure of two oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. One of the tankers was travelling between two Emirati ports, Dubai and Fujairah, when it was attacked. The attacks reinforced Emirati doubts about the US ability and/or willingness to protect Gulf shipping. In response to the seizures, the US announced increased allied patrols in the Strait but did not send additional ships or personnel to the region. Similarly, like the UAE, Saudi Arabia increasingly appears willing to go against US policies. It has resisted US pressure to recognise Israel

MORE than three years after burying the war hatchet, erstwhile Gulf rivals are moving in separate ways as they maneuver big power competition. Ironically, anti-Islamists like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have drifted towards greater independence from the United States while Qatar, long seen as a haven for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, is hueing closer to the region's long-standing security partner. The UAE and Saudi Arabia led a 3.5-year-long diplomatic and economic boycott of Qatar in a failed bid to force it to change its policies and break its ties to the Brotherhood and others. The embargo was lifted in 2020. Since then, the UAE has spearheaded efforts to return Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to the Arab fold, improve relations between Iran and the conservative Gulf states, and accommodate Russian efforts to circumvent Ukraine-related US and European sanctions.

Saudi Arabia last month hosted Mr. Al-Assad at an Arab League summit in Jeddah. Mr. Al-Assad's presence ended the League's suspension of Syria's membership a decade ago because of his brutal conduct during the country's civil war. The United States opposed Mr. Al-Assad's rehabilitation and has vowed to maintain its sanctions on Syria.

In support of the US, Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani left the summit before Mr. Al-Assad addressed the Jeddah gathering. Mr. Al-Thani's walkout demonstrated Qatar's deepening ties to the United States in response to the UAE-Saudi-led boycott. Last year, NATO designated Qatar a major non-NATO ally for its role in the US evacuation from Afghanistan. The deepening ties have not stopped Qatar, home to the largest US military base in the Middle East, from keeping its lines open to China, among others, by granting the People's Republic access to Hamad Port and purchasing Chinese ballistic missiles. Even so, Qatar, in contrast to the UAE, has been careful not to irritate the United States or stray too far from US policies. In the latest move to chart its own course, the UAE recently pulled out of a US-led maritime security force, the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). Led by a US admiral, the CMF groups 38 coun-

tries, including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, in a bid to halt Iranian attacks on commercial ships, weapons smuggling, and piracy. The UAE said its withdrawal was part of an assessment of "effective security cooperation" in the Middle East.

The UAE foreign ministry maintained that "the UAE is committed to peaceful dialogue and diplomatic engagement as a means of advancing the shared goals of regional security and stability."

The Emirati withdrawal follows Iran's recent seizure of two oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. One of the tankers was travelling between two Emirati ports, Dubai and Fujairah, when it was attacked. The attacks reinforced Emirati doubts about the US ability and/or willingness to protect Gulf shipping. In response to the seizures, the US announced increased allied patrols in the Strait but did not send additional ships or personnel to the region.

Similarly, like the UAE, Saudi Arabia increasingly appears willing to go against US policies. It has resisted US pressure to recognise Israel. The US sees recognition as crucial to its efforts to fashion an integrated regional air defense that would allow the United States to rejigger its security commitment to the Gulf.

By attaching conditions to potential recognition, including a firm US defense commitment and support for a Saudi civilian nuclear programme, Saudi Arabia has created a litmus test for US attitudes towards the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia has rejected US preconditions for nuclear cooperation, including a demand that it follow the UAE's example and surrender its right to extract, enrich or process uranium. At a mining conference in January, Saudi Oil Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud insisted that the kingdom seeks to own "the entire nuclear fuel cycle which involves the production of yellowcake, low-enriched uranium and the manufacturing of nuclear fuel."

In response, the kingdom turned to China. As a result, China and Saudi Arabia extended nuclear cooperation beyond uranium exploitation to nuclear technology last month.

The stepped-up cooperation follows a Chinese-mediated agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore diplomatic relations. Relations ruptured in 2016 after mobs stormed the kingdom's

diplomatic missions in protest against the execution of a prominent Saudi Shiite cleric.

While competing on multiple levels, Saudi Arabia and the UAE gamble that they can successfully play the United States and China against one another as they position themselves as regional leaders. In doing so, they place big bets. China has a significant interest in Gulf security but has neither the ability nor the will to replace the United States as a guarantor. Meanwhile, Gulf states remain dependent on an external guarantor.

Their large-scale sophisticated arms acquisitions have yet to enable them to create credible fighting forces. Their inability is not due to lack of resources. Instead, they have shied away from turning their militaries into fighting forces fearing that these could challenge monarchical rule.

Consequently, Saudi Arabia is groping for a face-saving exit from its failed eight-year-old military intervention in Yemen. At the same time, the UAE has established a string of strategic outposts along the Red Sea and in the Horn of Africa that it may not be able to defend sustainably.

"Saudi-US relations are achieving a renewed equilibrium. The UAE is still testing the waters and brinkmanship while Qatar plays it safe. There's an element of bluff poker in this. But, sooner or later, reality will reassert itself, and the Gulf states will accept that dependence on a security guarantor comes at a price," said a Western diplomat.

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## Positive Military Interference

Dr M Ali Hamza



Political engineering by the military is a highly controversial topic, and opinions on its positive aspects may vary. However, in situations where a country is deeply divided along political, ethnic, or religious lines, the military can serve as a unifying force. By intervening and maintaining order, the military can help prevent the escalation of violence and maintain stability during critical periods

PAKISTAN has a complex and eventful political history since its creation in 1947. This period of 76 years has witnessed numerous political changes, military interventions, democratic transitions, and Socio-economic challenges. Military has painted the larger portion of political canvas of Pakistan starting from Gen. M Ayyub Khan to Gen. Musharraf. Overall, it makes 33 years of direct military rule in the country. Thirteen years of Gen. Ayyub, eleven years of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq and nine Years of Gen. Musharraf. While military involvement in politics is generally viewed as a potential risk to democratic processes, but there have been instances where military-led political engineering has led to positive outcomes in certain contexts. To ground the argument, let's look into few undeniable examples of countries from the recent past.

Following World War II, Japan underwent a process of political engineering led by the United States and influenced by the military. The military occupation oversaw the dismantling of militarism, the drafting of a new constitution, and the promotion of democratic reforms. This intervention transformed Japan into a stable and prosperous democracy. Likewise, in Italy, the end of World War II brought about a period of political instability. It was military along with other political actors, played a role in ensuring stability and facilitating the transition to development. Military supported the drafting of a new constitution and participated in post-war governance, contributing to the establishment of Italy that we see today. While not a direct military intervention, the Marshall Plan, implemented after World War II, involved significant military support to rebuild war-torn Europe. The U.S. military played a vital role in recovery and economic development of Western Europe. Moreover, following the American Civil War, the United States faced the challenge of reintegrating the Southern states and addressing racial inequality. Once again, military played a role in overseeing the reconstruction period, which aimed to rebuild the South and protect the rights of newly freed slaves.

In 1974, the Portuguese military, led by a group of progressive officers, staged the Carnation Revolution to overthrow the authoritarian Estado Novo regime. This military intervention paved the way for the establishment of a democratic system in Portugal, ending nearly five decades of dictatorship.

While not strictly a military-led political engineering, Spain's transition to democracy following the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 involved the collaboration of both military and civilian actors. Key military figures, such as King Juan Carlos I and Adolfo Suárez, played crucial roles in managing the transition process and fostering political reforms that led to the establishment of democracy in Spain.

Turkey experienced several military interventions throughout its history. While these interventions were undeniably anti-democratic, the military intervention in 1997, known as the "postmodern coup," led to the removal of the Islamist-led government. However, it was military that facilitated a political transition that resulted in the restoration of democratic governance. South Korea's military played a significant role in the country's democratization process. The military regime of Park Chung-hee implemented economic reforms that laid the foundation for South Korea's rapid development. Today it is democratic establishment in South Korea but credit for its progress goes to military regime.

In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong, successfully achieved victory in the Chinese Civil War and established the People's Republic of China. The military played a crucial role in this process by defeating rival forces and securing the CCP's control over the country. Supporters of the CCP view this as a positive outcome, emphasizing the creation of a unified, independent and powerful China. The military, under the leadership of General Soedirman, played a crucial role in the Indonesian struggle for independence from Dutch colonial rule. The military, along with civilian leaders, fought against colonial forces and contributed to the establishment of an independent Indonesia in 1949. In the early years of Indonesia's independence, the military played a role in formulating and implementing the Pancasila ideology, which became the philosophical foundation of the state. Under President Sukarno's Guided Democracy concept, the military had significant influence in shaping policies and national development programs, with the aim of achieving political stability and economic progress. In the late 1990s, Indonesia experienced a period of political and economic turmoil, leading to widespread protests and calls for democratic reforms. The military once again played a crucial role in facil-

itating the transition, paving the way for democratic elections and reforms. The Malaysian military has always been involved in various development projects, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas. For instance, the military has been engaged in infrastructure development, building roads, schools, and healthcare facilities in remote regions. These initiatives aim to improve the living conditions of local communities and promote economic growth.

Over the past 100 years, there have been several significant military and political alliances that have shaped the global landscape. The notable examples are Triple Entente (1907-1914), Allied Powers (1914-1918), Axis Powers (1936-1945), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) (1949-present), Warsaw Pact (1955-1991), SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) (1954-1977), ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty) (1951-present), Organization of American States (OAS) (1948-present), European Union (EU) (1957-present) etc.

Political engineering by the military is a highly controversial topic, and opinions on its positive aspects may vary. However, in situations where a country is deeply divided along political, ethnic, or religious lines, the military can serve as a unifying force. By intervening and maintaining order, the military can help prevent the escalation of violence and maintain stability during critical periods. In some cases, the military has been seen as a force that can root out corruption and address inefficiencies within the political system. By assuming a temporary or transitional role, the military can tackle systemic issues that hinder good governance and work towards creating a more accountable political structure. It is believed that military has a direct vested interest in safeguarding national security and territorial integrity. In situations where political leaders are perceived as weak or incapable of addressing security challenges, the military may feel compelled to step in to protect national interests. Today, in context of Pakistan the extreme political polarization requires third party to engage in to pave the path and bring in unity. The history observes that such role can be performed by no one but the military elite. Yes, the military interventions should ideally be temporary and transitional, with a clear plan for the restoration of civilian governance.



## Briefs

## PM Shehbaz wants relief for the poor

FROM PAGE 01  
transparency while providing scholarships and education to the youth. PM Shehbaz directed to continue the projects initiated under the Kissan Package while renewable energy projects should also be made part of the development budget. The prime minister also directed to allocate special funds in the upcoming budget for projects to bring innovation in the energy sector. He said all the slow ongoing projects under the PSDP that had lost their importance, should be removed from the development budget. All stakeholders of the relevant sectors and the allied parties should be consulted before including any development project in the budget and their proposals should also be considered, the prime minister directed. Earlier, the meeting was briefed in detail about the proposals for adding new projects in the upcoming fiscal year and progress on the ongoing projects. It was informed that as per the direction of the prime minister, projects related to the agriculture sector, renewable energy, higher education for youth, professional training and job-raising schemes would be important part of the development budget. The meeting was further told that the IT sector development and export boosting projects would also be part of the development budget. Shehbaz Sharif was informed that the Prime Minister Kissan Package and Youth Empowerment Programme, that had been included in the budget 2022-23, were yielding fruits now as over 60,000 youth were being provided internship in various government development projects whereas the production of wheat, broke the 10-year record this year. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Sanaulah, Rana Tanvir Hussain, Advisor Ahad Khan Cheema, Special Assistants to Prime Minister Malik Ahmad Khan, Attaullah Tarrar, Jehanzeb Khan and other relevant officials.

## PTI's offer only for 'real decision...'

FROM PAGE 01  
"Dialogue is a key to evolving democracy but it cannot be held with 'anarchists and arsonists' in the garb of politicians," the premier said in a tweet. His statement comes just days after Mr Khan appealed to the powers that be for immediate talks with state officials.

## Justice Isa refutes rumours...

FROM PAGE 01  
"factually incorrect stories should not be propagated, as they cause unnecessary and avoidable misgivings and harm". "My family and I can attest to the pain of being the brunt of sponsored false stories in the recent past," he added. "Ascertain its truthfulness carefully (before you spread it) lest you harm people through your own ignorance" (Al-Qur'an, 49:6), he quoted a verse from the Holy Quran. The top court judge further said, "I stand by my oath of office, to defend and uphold the Constitution of Pakistan and cannot concur with anything less. Garnishing facts to create a controversial narrative is damaging to the institution." "Let us not be detracted, let us work together to build a strong judicial system which focuses on the administration of expeditious justice," he concluded.

## Imran to file suit against NAB chief

FROM PAGE 01  
Imran Khan vowed: "My credibility has never been questioned. Nevertheless, act of implicating me in a bogus inquiry followed by my illegal and malafide arrest, have adversely affected my reputation." PTI Chairman stated that it had subjected him to ridicule; therefore, he was well within his right to initiate defamation proceedings.

## Pak-Sino collaboration in PV sector moves ahead successfully

As Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to the adverse impact of increasingly severe climate change, the sustainable development has become a pressing issue in the country

BEIJING: China's leading solar solutions provider LONGi officially released here the sixth annual corporate sustainability report, providing an elaborate summary of its practices and achievements in the field of environment, society and governance (ESG) in the past year. Pakistan, as an indispensable international market for LONGi, poised to show more competitiveness in global PV market. "Since 2020, LONGi Solar has successfully exported more than 1GW of solar panels to the Pakistani market, as a momentous milestone," Ali Majid, General Manager, Pakistan, LONGi Solar, told Gwadar pro in an exclusive interview. As Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to the adverse impact of increasingly severe climate change, the sustainable de-

velopment has become a pressing issue in the country. Photovoltaic power generation, as the best choice to solve Pakistan's power shortage and optimize its energy structure to a great extent based on fossil fuels, while saving foreign exchange required for energy imports, has vast potential for future development. From 2012 to 2022, LONGi produced a total of 290GW of photovoltaic products, with the cumulative output of clean electricity exceeded 1,148,287 GWh. According to the International Energy Agency's global power grid average emission factor, it is equivalent to avoiding 536 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. As for Pakistani market, both distributed and centralized PV products have market segment demand, distributed PV systems,

such as rooftop solar installations on residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, have been gaining popularity in Pakistan. Net metering policies and incentives have been introduced to promote distributed generation and allow consumers to offset their electricity bills by exporting excess power back to the grid, Majid mentioned. "At the same time, our government has been focusing on the development of large-scale centralized PV projects, including solar parks and utility-scale solar installations," he added, "these centralized PV systems contribute to the overall renewable energy capacity of the country and help diversify the energy mix." Currently, both local and international players are competing to capture a share of Pakistan, such

a burgeoning PV market. In 2022, China's photovoltaic module exports to Pakistan has reached approximately USD 870 million, with a total installed capacity of 3.2GW, a year-on-year increase of 54 percent and 37 percent, respectively, according to the statistics of China Photovoltaic Industry Association (CPIA). On the other hand, for Pakistan itself, in order to maximize the development of sustainable industries such as photovoltaics, it is imperative to solve problems such as the foreign exchange gap. A large foreign exchange gap can put pressure on the country's ability to finance its imports, including PV products, and may necessitate measures such as foreign exchange controls, import restrictions, or adjustments to import tariffs, Majid told the reporter.

"Currency fluctuations, for example, can affect the pricing of imported PV products. Thus, a stable economic environment, the basis for ensuring the smooth development of such a sustainable industry, need the joint efforts of the government, industry and enterprises ourselves," Majid noted that if Pakistan hopes to truly carve out a niche in the global photovoltaic market with unique competitiveness, resultant force of the three are indispensable. Energy is one of the areas where CPEC has invested the most, progressed the fastest, and achieved the most remarkable results. "The global photovoltaic industry is developing in full swing. China-Pakistan cooperation in related industries can make due contributions to the global response to climate change," Majid added.

## Pakistan greatly values ties with Italy, says Asif

FROM PAGE 01  
took place on 29-30 May in Rome, where the two sides agreed to establish a joint framework to deal with climate change and cooperation in water management. Both sides signed an important "Roadmap for Cooperation" which covers climate change, trade & investment, heritage & culture, agriculture, technical cooperation, higher education and transfer of technology in related sectors. 'We shall continue to explore the avenues with focus on agriculture, renewable energy, textiles, construction and tourism. Collaboration in fields of textiles, agriculture, livestock, marble, pharmaceuticals and mass manufacturing would help enhance Pakistan's industrial scope and increase exports of value added goods'.

## Elahi re-arrested soon after release

FROM PAGE 01  
According to anti-corruption sources, Elahi is being moved to Gujranwala. The sources further said that a team of elite forces has been deployed for the former CM's transfer. They added that two cases of corruption worth billions of rupees have been registered against Elahi in Gujranwala and Gujarat. "Elahi's bail was cancelled in the Gujranwala case on June 1," claimed the sources. The ACE officials said that the PTI leader will be presented before an anti-corruption court today (Saturday).

## Uzbek President addresses the Asia-European summit

DNA  
TASHKENT: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev has welcomed all participants of the next Central Asia - European Union leaders' meeting. I would like to echo the words of thanks to the President of Kyrgyz Republic distinguished Sadyr Nurgojoevich Japarov for excellent organization of the summit and traditional warm and cordial hospitality extended to us in Cholon-Ata - one of the most scenic places in our region. I express special gratitude to the President of the European Union distinguished Mr. Charles Michel. Your commitment and full support for the development of a constructive political dialogue and multifaceted cooperation with the countries of Central Asia to large extent determine the efficiency of our contacts. Dear colleagues! Less than a year has passed since our first open, trust-based and productive meeting in Astana. During this short period of time, we have jointly done a lot of work. In November last year, together we held a high-level conference in Uzbekistan on regional connectivity, focusing on the promotion of projects in the following areas: - Transport communications; - Energy and water management, including those under the framework of Global Gateway Strategy of our European partners. A number of major regional projects have been launched to establish a sustainable energy system in Central Asia; and on vocational education. I would like to emphasize the outcomes of the following events: - The Civil Society Forum in Tashkent in March; - The Second Economic Forum in Almaty and the annual meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in Samarkand, held last month. These events have once again demonstrated positive and qualitative changes in our dialogue with the European partners. Today, Central Asia is a center of gravity and space for new economic opportunities for leading European companies and banks.

## 'Will do everything for Treble', says Erling Haaland

LONDON: Manchester City striker Erling Haaland says he "will do everything" to help the club to a historic Treble. City have won this season's Premier League and can add to that if they beat Manchester United in the FA Cup final on Saturday and Inter Milan in the Champions League final on 10 June. United won each of those trophies in 1999 and are the only English club to have done such a Treble. "It would be unreal to make this history," said 22-year-old Haaland. Despite City's domestic dominance, they are yet to win the Champions League and Haaland hopes he can be the missing piece to secure success in European football's biggest tournament. "This is why they bought me of course, to get this, we don't have to hide that," Haaland told BBC sports editor Dan Roan. "It would mean everything. I will do everything I possibly can to try to make it happen. It's my biggest dream and hopefully dreams do come true." He added: "But as well it's not easy - it's two finals against two good teams that will do everything they can to try to destroy that. "They will be motivated, they will be ready and we have to play at our best, because if we play at our best we have a really good chance of achieving exactly that." City overtook Arsenal this season to win a third Premier League title in a row under manager Pep Guardiola. "We've been chasing the whole season so when we won the Premier League it was a big relief," said Haaland, who scored 36 top-flight goals this season. "Now we've got two finals left and now the only thing we can focus on is these two finals before the vacation." I'm 196cm tall and have got long blonde hair - people are going to see me' Haaland has had a stunning first season in English football since joining City from Borussia Dortmund last summer. He has broken the Premier League record for most goals in a season with his tally and, overall, has scored 52 goals during the campaign. - Agencies

## Fishing helped Altmaier down Sinner at French Open

PARIS: German Daniel Altmaier said his love of fishing helped him knock out Italian eighth seed Jannik Sinner in the French Open second round on Thursday after a dramatic five-hour, 26-minute battle - the fifth longest match in tournament history. Altmaier, the world number 79, twice stayed off match points late in the fourth set before eventually prevailing 6-7 (0/7), 7-6 (9/7), 1-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 on Court Suzanne Lenglen on his fifth match point. "A week before coming here I was fishing with my dad to calm down a little bit," he said. "So I think, yeah, in the fifth set maybe the experience of fishing a little bit helped me." Altmaier and Sinner also played a five-set match in the US Open first round last year, when Sinner was the victor. "We've had historic matches with so many match points," added Altmaier. "I don't know if you can call this a 'historical' match, but I think it was one to remember." The longest ever match at



Roland Garros remains the six hours and 33 minutes it took Fabrice Santoro to beat fellow Frenchman Arnaud Clement in 2004. Thursday's clash was the longest since Lorenzo Giustino beat Corentin Moutet in six hours and five minutes in 2020, which was shorter only than Santoro and Clement and came before the introduction of final-set tie-breaks. Altmaier will take on Grigor Dimitrov for a spot in the second week. He has enjoyed a strong run of results on clay this season,

including reaching the Madrid Open quarter-finals as a qualifier last month, having been ranked as low as 113th in April. "It means a lot. I think personally in the process of the last seven weeks it's been really good. I've been really working really hard," Altmaier added. "Really being responsible for some things off the court, on the court. This is showing off in a very short-term, and I think this is beautiful." It was Altmaier's second win against a top-10 opponent after his victory over Matteo Berrettini in

the 2020 French Open third round. The defeat ends an up-and-down clay-court season for Sinner, who withdrew injured from the Barcelona Open before losing to Francisco Cerundolo in the Rome last 16. "I feel like the season is going good. I played a lot of matches. But for sure the last two tournaments were not that what I was expecting," said the world number nine. "It is a tough one to swallow, but I keep going." The 24-year-old Altmaier twice averted defeat when Sinner was serving for a last-32 place in set four before winning the third tie-break of the match. Altmaier, who reached the fourth round in 2020, broke in game seven of the decider but then also failed to serve it out. He immediately gave himself another chance, though, and this time crept over the line as he secured a surprise win on his fifth match point after a thrilling final game in which he also saved three break points. - Agencies

## PCB calls players for specialised camps

PAKISTAN Cricket Board (PCB) has announced to organise specialised camps for spinners, fast bowlers, and batters. In an announcement made today, PCB named players who have been called for specialised camps at NCA. Pakistan's captain in all three formats, Babar Azam and wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan will miss the camp because they are traveling for Hajj in the second week of June. Sarfaraz Ahmed will miss the camp due to personal commitments whereas Mohammad Nawaz is recovering from finger injury. Players including Shaheen Shah Afridi and Shadab Khan, who are playing in County Cricket, will complete their contracts. As many as thirteen spinners, 11 fast bowlers, and 14 batters will undergo training camps from June 10 to 21. The men's national selection committee has invited players from the Pakistan men's, Shaheens and U19 sides and they will train under the guidance of national

team's and NCA's coaches. The upcoming first assignment of the national team after a gap of almost three months will be the ICC Test Championship matches against Sri Lanka. Pakistan will visit the Island nation to play two Tests at the end of July. Later this year, the Asia Cup and World Cup are also scheduled to be played. List of invited players Spinners - Abrar Ahmed, Ali Asfand, Arafat Minhas, Faisal Akram, Mohammad Junaid, Mehran Mumtaz, Mubasir Khan, Noman Ali, Qasim Akram, Sajid Khan, Sufiyan Muqeem, Usama Mir and Zahid Mehmood Fast bowlers - Aamir Jamal, Arshad Iqbal, Faheem Ashraf, Haris Rauf, Ihsanullah, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Naseem Shah and Shah Nawaz Dahani For spinners - 10 till 15 June Fast bowlers - 16 till 21 June

## Pak unlikely to play ODI matches during SL tour

LAHORE: Pakistan are unlikely to play ODI matches during their Test tour of Sri Lanka in July this year. The Sri Lanka Cricket and PCB had discussed the possibility of playing ODI matches alongside the two-match Test series between the two sides. However, according to sources, the idea is likely to be dropped due to unforeseen circumstances. Additionally, SLC will announce the schedule of the two-match Test series, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship, soon. There is also uncertainty around Pakistan's participation in the Asia Cup, which the PCB is supposed to host in September this year. - DNA

## Naseem returns to Leicestershire

LONDON: Leicestershire Foxes cricket team have received a significant boost with the return of talented Pakistan pacer, Naseem Shah. Naseem, who had initially joined Leicestershire as a temporary replacement for Afghanistan's Naveen-ul-Haq, is coming back into the fold to fill in for the injured Wiaan Mulder. This development comes after Naseem's brief stint in the team's first three games of the Vitality T20 Blast, during which he showcased his skills on the field. Naseem's arrival was necessitated by Naveen-ul-Haq's delayed participation in the Indian Premier League (IPL), which led Leicestershire to seek additional cover for their fast-bowling department. However, with Mulder now out of action due to injury, Naseem has been given the opportunity to rejoin the Foxes and contribute to their campaign. In the initial three games that Naseem played, he claimed two wickets at an economy rate of 8.36. The Leicestershire Foxes have had a challenging start to their season, suffering defeats in all four of their games so far. Therefore, the return of both Naseem Shah and Naveen-ul-Haq, who is finally available after his IPL commitments, comes as a timely boost for the team. The Foxes will be eager to turn their fortunes around and secure their first victory of the season when they face Northamptonshire on Friday, June 2. - APP

## Sabalenka powers into French Open fourth round

Sabalenka, the big-serving world number two, beat Russian Rakhimova 6-2 6-2 on a sunbathed Court Philippe Chatrier to set up a clash with American Sloane Stephens or Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan in her quest for a second Grand Slam title

PARIS: Aryna Sabalenka swatted aside Kamilla Rakhimova to remind her rivals of her French Open title credentials while Russian 11th seed Karen Khachanov also moved into the fourth round by stopping wildcard Thanasi Kokkinakis on Friday. Sabalenka, the big-serving world number two, beat Russian Rakhimova 6-2 6-2 on a sunbathed Court Philippe Chatrier to set up a clash with American Sloane Stephens or Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan in her quest for a second Grand Slam title. Khachanov looked to be in trouble midway

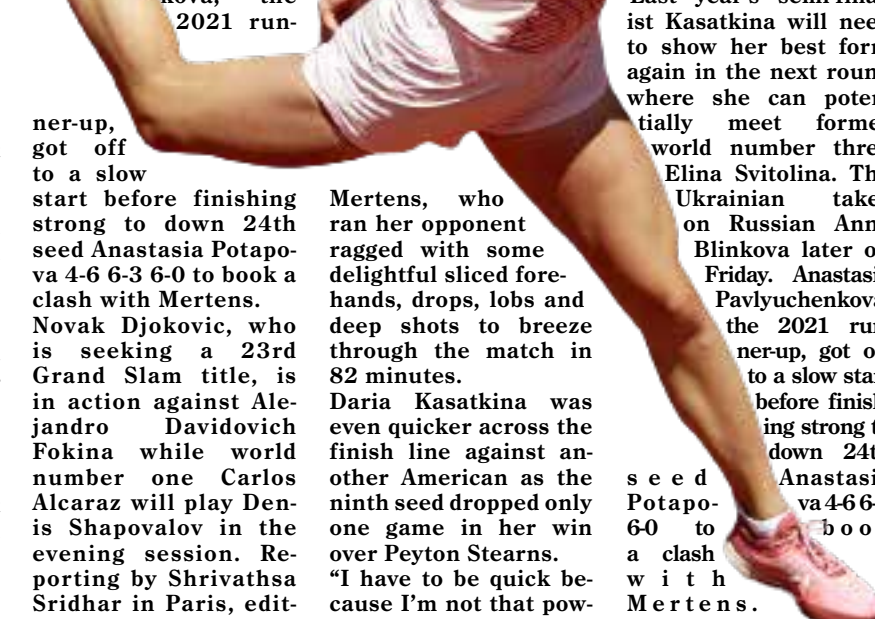
through his match against Kokkinakis but stepped up his game in the crunch moments to get past his Australian opponent 6-4 6-1 3-6 7-6(5). World number three Jessica Pegula had never beaten Elise Mertens in two previous meetings and the American's hopes of snapping that run to remain on track for a maiden Grand Slam trophy ended in disappointment following a 6-1 6-3 defeat. The 29-year-old Pegula particularly struggled against the versatility of Mertens, who ran her opponent ragged with some delightful sliced forehands, drops,

lobs and deep shots to breeze through the match in 82 minutes. Daria Kasatkina was even quicker across the finish line against another American as the ninth seed dropped only one game in her win over Peyton Stearns. "I have to be quick because I'm not that powerful like many girls," Kasatkina explained. "Physically I'm not that gifted, so I have to be quick. I have to find ways to win, to survive. "So I have to do it with my legs, with the brain, and try to squeeze the maximum I can." Last year's semi-finalist Kasatkina

will need to show her best form again in the next round where she can potentially meet former world number three Elina Svitolina. The Ukrainian takes on Russian Anna Blinkova later on Friday. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the 2021 runner-up, got off to a slow start before finishing strong to down 24th seed Anastasia Potapova 4-6 6-3 6-0 to book a clash with Mertens. Novak Djokovic, who is seeking a 23rd Grand Slam title, is in action against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina while world number one Carlos Alcaraz will play Denis Shapovalov in the evening session. Reporting by Shrivathsa Sridhar in Paris, editing by Pritha Sarkar.

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## Briefs

## NATO chief heading to Turkey this weekend

BRUSSELS: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will hold talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other senior Turkish officials this weekend as pressure mounts on Turkey to lift its objections to Sweden joining the military organization.

In a statement on Friday, NATO headquarters said Stoltenberg would attend Erdogan's inauguration, after the long-term Turkish leader won an election runoff last weekend. The former Norwegian prime minister will also take part in meetings in Turkey on Sunday. No details were provided.

NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12, but Turkey and Hungary have yet to endorse the move. All 31 member countries must ratify a candidate's accession protocol for it to join.

Turkey's government accuses Sweden of being too lenient on "terrorist organizations" and security threats, including militant Kurdish groups and people associated with a 2016 coup attempt. Hungary has also delayed its approval, but the reasons why have not been made publicly clear.

"My message is that Sweden has delivered, and the time has come to ratify Sweden," Stoltenberg told reporters on Thursday at the conclusion of two days of informal talks between alliance foreign ministers to prepare for the summit in Vilnius.—APP

## Poll shows growing support for German far right

BERLIN: Prominent members of German mainstream parties have expressed alarm at a new poll that shows support for the far-right Alternative for Germany at a record high.

The DeutschlandTrend survey, conducted monthly by infratest dimap for public broadcaster ARD, that was released on Thursday puts voter support for Alternative for Germany at 18%, on a par with Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats. In the 2021 election, Scholz's party received 25.7% of the vote, while Alternative for Germany, or AfD, got 10.3%. "This (...) is a disaster and should be understood as an alarm signal for all parties of the center," said Norbert Roettgen, a senior lawmaker for the main opposition Christian Democrats, whose support stood at 29% in the poll of 1,302 voters conducted from May 30-31. The margin of error was up to 3 percentage points. Roettgen said his own center-right party should ask itself why it hasn't profited as much from voters' unhappiness at the government. "We bear responsibility for changing this again quickly," she said late Thursday.—APP

## US reopens embassy in Seychelles

WASHINGTON: The United States has reopened its embassy in the Seychelles after a 27-year absence during which China and other U.S. rivals made significant inroads in the Indian Ocean islands.

The U.S. State Department announced the move late Thursday, after having unveiled plans to open a diplomatic mission in northern Norway, which will be its only such facility above the Arctic Circle.

The Seychelles embassy is part of a push to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. is already constructing an embassy in the Maldives and has opened or announced plans to open embassies in the Pacific, including in the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Kiribati. The U.S. Embassy in the Seychelles capital of Victoria was shuttered in 1996 as part of cost-saving measures after the end of the Cold War. American interests in the 115-island archipelago about 1,500 kilometers (800 miles) east of mainland Africa had been handled by diplomats based in Mauritius.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on PSDP proposals for 2023-24. —DNA

## No Ukraine cease-fire without Russia's withdrawal: Blinken

Two drones also attacked energy facilities in Russia's western Smolensk region, which borders Belarus, in the early hours of Friday, officials said

## FOREIGN DESK

KYIV: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that there can be no cease-fire in the war in Ukraine unless it is part of a "just and lasting" peace deal that includes Russia's military withdrawal.

Blinken said that "a cease-fire that simply freezes current lines in place" and allows Russian President Vladimir Putin "to consolidate control over the territory he has seized, and rest, rearm, and reattack — that is not a just and lasting peace."

Russia must also pay a share of Ukraine's reconstruction and be held accountable for launching its full-scale invasion of its neighbor in February 2022, Blinken said

in a speech during a visit to Finland, which recently joined NATO and shares a long border with Russia. Allowing Moscow to keep the one-fifth of Ukraine territory it has occupied would send the wrong message to Russia and "to other would-be aggressors around the world," according to Blinken. Washington is ready to support peace efforts by other countries, including recent overtures from China and Brazil, he said. But any peace agreement must uphold the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. The United States is a leading Western ally and supplier of arms to Kyiv to help it push back against the Kremlin's forces. China, which says it is neutral and wants to serve as a

mediator but has supported Moscow politically, on Friday urged countries to stop sending weapons to Ukraine. In Ukraine, air defenses shot down more than 30 Russian cruise missiles and drones Friday in Moscow's sixth air attack in six days on Kyiv, local officials said. The Ukrainian capital was simultaneously attacked from different directions by Iranian-made Shahed drones and cruise missiles from the Caspian region, senior Kyiv official Serhii Popko wrote on Telegram. A 68-year-old man and an 11-year-old child were wounded in the attack, with private houses, outbuildings and cars sustaining damage from falling debris, according to Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Of-

fice. A recent spate of attacks on the capital has put strain on residents and tested the strength of Ukraine's air defenses while Kyiv officials plot what they say is an upcoming counteroffensive to push back the Kremlin's forces 15 months after their full-scale invasion. Kyiv was the target of drone and missile attacks on 17 days last month, including daylight attacks. Moscow's strategy could backfire, however, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. The air campaign aims to "degrade Ukrainian counteroffensive capabilities, but ... the Russian prioritization of Kyiv is likely further limiting the campaign's ability to meaningfully constrain potential Ukrainian

counteroffensive actions," it said in an assessment late Thursday. Ukrainian air defenses intercepted all 15 cruise missiles and 21 attack drones, Ukraine's chief of staff, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, said. Ukraine's presidential office said Friday that at least four civilians were killed and 42 wounded over the previous 24 hours. Meanwhile, border regions of Russia once again came under fire from Ukraine. Recent cross-border raids have also rattled those regions of Russia and put the Kremlin on guard. That could be a Ukrainian strategy to disperse Russian forces before a counteroffensive begins. "Russian commanders now face an acute dilemma of whether to (strengthen)

defenses in Russia's border regions or reinforce their lines in occupied Ukraine," the U.K. ministry of defense said Friday. Air defense systems shot down "several Ukrainian drones" overnight Thursday in Russia's southern Kursk region, which borders Ukraine, regional Gov. Roman Starovoi wrote on Telegram. In the neighboring Bryansk region, which also borders Ukraine, regional Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said that Ukrainian forces shelled two villages on Friday morning. No casualties were reported. Two drones also attacked energy facilities in Russia's western Smolensk region, which borders Belarus, in the early hours of Friday, officials said.

## Major disruption expected in UK as railway strike begins

LONDON: Passengers across England are expected to face two days of disruption as thousands of railway workers from two rail unions are holding industrial action on Friday and Saturday.

Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) union began industrial action on Friday over an ongoing pay dispute with train companies.

Separately, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) members will walk out on Saturday after the union rejected the 4% pay rise offer from the Rail Delivery Group. While the commuters are expected to be highly affected for 48 hours, ASLEF strike will most likely hit the FA Cup final between Manchester City and Manchester United, which will take place at Wembley Stadium on Saturday. According to National Rail, the companies that are impacted by the strikes are Avanti West Coast, C2C, Chiltern Railways, Cross-Country, East Midlands Railway, Great Northern, Great Western Railway, Greater Anglia (including Stansted Express), LNER, London NorthWestern Railway, Northern Rail, South Western Railway, Southern (ASLEF days only), Southern (including Gatwick Express), Thameslink, TransPennine Express and West Midlands Railway.—APP

## US-bound Chinese flights avoiding Russian airspace

MOSCOW: Chinese airlines are avoiding Russian airspace in newly approved routes to and from the United States, Reuters reported on Thursday, citing flight tracking website FlightAware and industry officials. The US Department of Transportation (USDOT) approved four new weekly flights between US and China on May 18, by carriers including Air China and China Eastern. This brought the total number of weekly roundtrips to 12 from the previous total of eight.

FlightAware records show that the new Chinese flights are not overflying Russia, while previously approved Chinese flights are still using Russian airspace. Washington and its European allies closed their airspace to Russian aircraft last year as part of Ukraine-related sanctions against Moscow, and Russia retaliated by barring US and European airlines from flying over its territory. China was not affected by the restrictions and continued to use Russian airspace. It was reported earlier this year that the Biden administration was urged to ban Chinese airlines from passing over Russia on US routes.—APP

## Clashes in Senegal leave at least 9 dead

DAKAR: Clashes between police and supporters of Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko left nine people dead, the government said Friday, with authorities issuing a blanket ban on the use of several social media platforms in the aftermath of the violence. The deaths occurred mainly in the capital, Dakar, and Ziguinchor in the south, where Sonko is mayor, Interior Minister Antoine Felix Abdoulaye Diome said in a statement. Some social media sites used by demonstrators to incite violence, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have been suspended, he said. "The state of Senegal has taken every measure to guarantee the safety of people and property. We are going to reinforce security everywhere in the country," Diome said. Sonko was convicted Thursday of corrupting youth but acquitted on charges of raping a woman who worked at a massage parlor and making death threats against her. The court sentenced Sonko to two years in prison. He didn't attend his trial in Dakar, and was judged in absentia. His lawyer said a warrant hadn't been issued yet for the politician's arrest. Sonko came in third in Senegal's 2019 presidential election and is popular with the country's youth.—APP

## EU leaders call for new elections in Kosovo following clashes

BRUSSELS: The leaders of France and Germany have urged Kosovo to hold new elections in several northern municipalities, hoping to ease tensions in the region following heated protests by local Serbs over the election of Albanian mayors. Unrest erupted in Serbia's breakaway region of Kosovo earlier this week after the local government in Pristina validated election results in the north of the province, despite a tiny voter turnout of just 3.5%, confirming 'victories' of several ethnic Albanian mayors in majority Serbian towns. At least 52 protesters were injured in clashes with NATO security forces on Monday, as were 30 troops from the US-led military bloc.

In comments to reporters after meeting with Kosovo's President Vjosa Osmani and her Serbian counterpart, Aleksandar Vucic, in Moldova on Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron said he and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz both called for another round of voting in the disputed districts. "We have asked the two parties to organize new elections in these four municipalities as soon as possible, with an undertaking from Kosovo with participation in these elections in a clear manner on the part of the

Serbian side," Macron said, adding that he also pressed for the creation of an association of Serb municipalities in order to grant more autonomy to the northern districts.

Though Kosovo's president said it would be possible to hold new elections, she noted that would only take place if 20% of local residents supported a repeal of the last vote.

Serbian military issues warning over Kosovo violence. "It's a very democratic process. We allow our citizens to determine whether they want new elections and, I believe without a problem, we can move forward with that, but we need participation from their side," Osmani said, referring to Serbian citizens who had boycotted the prior election.

Serbia's President Vucic did not comment on his meeting with Osmani in Moldova, but said earlier that Kosovo should remove the "alleged mayors" in the north and withdraw special forces troops deployed to ethnic-Serbian districts.

Kosovo has seen several waves of unrest since NATO's 1999 bombing campaign. In 2008, the Western-backed Albanian authorities unilaterally declared independence from Serbia, a move quickly backed by the US and many

## Serbian, Kosovo presidents meet European leaders

BELGRADE: The Serbian and Kosovo presidents on Thursday met with several European leaders over recent tensions between the two countries. The meetings came on the sidelines of the European Political Community held in Moldova. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic met with French President Emmanuel Macron, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "I thanked President Macron for the firm stance and support he gave to Serbia regarding the recent events. I expressed my concerns about the recent increase in violence in the north of Kosovo," said Vucic. Vucic also said that Sanchez is a "sincere friend" of Serbia. Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Macron and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. "The president stressed that Kosovo's efforts to restore order in the north of the country have been challenged by illegal Serb structures, which have turned into criminal gangs backed by (Serbian President Aleksandar) Vucic, who attack the Kosovo police and NATO's Kosovo Peaceke," said Osmani's office in a statement. added that EU countries should take a stance against trends that endanger peace and stability in the region. The EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell after the meeting called for holding new local elections in northern Kosovo with the participation of Serbs. "We have 3 clear requests, new local elections now, ensuring the participation of Kosovo Serbs and start the work to establish the Association of Serbian Majority Municipalities w/in EU-facilitated Dialogue," Borrell said.—APP

other Western countries. Some states continue to view Kosovo as part of Serbia, however, among them Russia, China and five EU member states. Moscow has said NATO is

to blame for the recent hostilities, with the Russian Foreign Ministry recently stating the alliance had become "a source of unnecessary violence" and an "escalation factor" in Kosovo.—Agencies

## LCCI, OGRA join hands to promote safe practices

By collectively emphasizing the importance of safe use and handling of LPG, we can effectively reduce accidents and create a culture of safety within the industry

LAHORE: Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) acknowledges the utmost value of every life and is committed to ensuring safe practices in the rapidly growing Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) industry. In line with this objective, OGRA has initiated campaigns to raise awareness among the masses about the safe use and handling of LPG. To further accelerate these efforts and foster collaboration, the Chairman and Members of OGRA are scheduled to visit the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on June 5th, 2023 (Monday). During this visit, they will engage with all stakeholders of the LPG industry to enhance their participation and encourage them to collaborate with OGRA in promoting awareness campaigns on the safe use of LPG by consumers and ensuring the implementation of safe practices throughout the LPG industry. LCCI and OGRA invites all stakeholders from the LPG industry to actively participate in this significant event, emphasizing the importance of national interest and working together to achieve success in our collective endeavour to promote the safe use of LPG. The visit to the LCCI premises presents an excellent opportunity for industry players, regulators, and businesses to come together, exchange ideas, and establish partnerships that will contribute to a safer LPG industry. By uniting our efforts, we can create a secure environment that prioritizes the well-being of both consumers and industry workers. OGRA and LCCI recognize the crucial role played by all stakeholders in ensuring safe practices, and their involvement in this event is vital to achieving our shared objectives. By collectively emphasizing the importance of safe use and handling of LPG, we can effectively reduce accidents and create a culture of safety within the industry.—APP

## China clarifies stance on Taiwan reunification

Beijing reserves the right to use force against the Taipei government, the defense minister said

## DNA

BEIJING: Beijing will "absolutely not" renounce the right to use force in reunifying with Taiwan, the country's defense minister, Li Shangfu, said on Thursday, as cited by the South China Morning Post. At the same time, the Defense Ministry voiced hopes for peaceful reconciliation while warning against foreign interference on the island. During a Thursday press briefing, Defense Ministry spokesman Tan Kefei described the meeting Li had with his Singa-

porean counterpart, Ng Eng Hen, earlier in the day. He said the officials discussed Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of its sovereign territory.

"We will never tolerate any attempt by the Democratic Progressive Party authorities to seek foreign support for Taiwanese independence, nor will we tolerate any attempt by external forces to use Taiwan to contain China. We will absolutely not promise to renounce the use of force," the spokesman said, referring to Taiwan's ruling party. He added that Beijing would "continue to strive for peaceful

reunification with the greatest sincerity and greatest efforts." The US revealed earlier this week that Li, who is on Washington's sanctions list, had declined a meeting with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on the sidelines of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue security forum in Singapore. The Chinese Foreign Ministry explained that the US must "correct" its policies towards China and stop meddling in its affairs. China rebukes US over Taiwan trade deal Read more China rebukes US over Taiwan trade deal Asked about a possible meet-

ing between Li and Austin on Wednesday, the Chinese Defense Ministry stated that while it "attaches great importance to the development of Sino-US military relations," there could not be dialogue "without principles." "On the one hand, the US keeps saying that it wants to strengthen communication, but on the other hand, it ignores China's concerns and artificially creates obstacles, seriously undermining the mutual trust between the two militaries," the ministry spokesman added. Austin, who had previously described Chi-

na as "a pacing challenge" for the US, said on Thursday that a high level of communication between the two countries can help "prevent things from spiraling out of control." The US and China have accused each other of stirring up tensions in the Taiwan Strait and weaponizing trade relations in order to coerce others. On Tuesday, the Pentagon claimed that a Chinese fighter jet was conducting dangerous maneuvers close to an American reconnaissance aircraft. Beijing has rejected this claim.



**Briefs**

**IHC warns of summoning PM if court orders flouted**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) warned on Friday that if the court's order to recover Mirza Murad Akbar, brother of former PM Imran Khan's aide Shahzad Akbar, was not complied with, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif would be summoned to court. The judge issued the remarks while hearing a petition seeking the recovery of Murad, who his family claims was picked up by law-enforcement personnel. In the last hearing on May 31, the court had directed the capital police to produce the missing man within the next two days. According to a first-information report (FIR) registered with Shalimar police station, Murad was "abducted" by people purportedly from different law-enforcement agencies from his Islamabad residence on May 28. The case was registered under section 365 in response to a complaint lodged by Danyal Akbar, Murad's son, who subsequently filed a plea with the IHC for the recovery of his father.

**India opp. leader Gandhi takes a dig at Modi in US visit**

DNA

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi's handling of relations with China, saying Beijing was "occupying our territory," while also taking a dig at the Hindu nationalist leader over the country's religious polarization. "The fact of the matter is China is occupying our territory. It's an accepted fact," Gandhi, who belongs to the opposition Congress party, said in remarks at The National Press Club during a visit to Washington. "It's absolutely unacceptable. Prime Minister seems to believe otherwise." India's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Gandhi's trip comes weeks ahead of Modi's scheduled US visit later this month. China and India have been uneasy neighbours for decades following the war on their disputed Himalayan frontier in the early 1960s. After deadly border clashes in 2020 that killed 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops, China this year ramped up the tension by renaming 11 locations in India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China calls southern Tibet and claims as its territory. India has rejected and denied those claims.

**Another person involved in riots identified**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Another Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf miscreant involved in the May 9 riots was identified. The video of PTI leader Syed Muhammad Nazim Abbas surfaced on the media in which he could be seen damaging the government property and military installations. He played a key role in the attacks of May 9. Abbas is a PTI leader from PP-95 Chiniot and a resident of Nisar Colony, Lahore. The process of identification of other miscreants involved in the violent incidents of May 9 is also going on. In the video, it could be seen that Abbas participated vigorously and aggressively in protests and was at the forefront of vandalism and attacks. He was raising anti-army slogans and patronizing other miscreants during May 9 tragedy. ATC on Thursday sent 25 PTI workers to jail on six-day judicial remand for identification parade in cases registered under Anti-Terrorism Act for attacking and torching Corps Commander House in Lahore on May 9.

**Mariyum, German envoy mull cooperation in film, art**

Germany's promise to provide 84 million euros in aid to the International Conference on Climate Change was another proof of Germany's friendship with Pakistan, the minister maintained

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Germany have agreed on bilateral cooperation in the fields of film, art and culture. The agreement was reached in a meeting of German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas with Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb, said a press release issued here on Friday. During the meeting, a discussion was also held on a proposal for cooperation with the University of Babelsberg and the University of Television and Film Munich. Mariyum Aurangzeb apprised the German Ambassador about the Film and Culture Policy of the Government of Pakistan and the incentives given under the policy. She said that the government was desirous of showing the beauty, culture and civilization of Pakistan to the whole world through screen tourism. Foreign filmmakers should benefit from special concessions given for filmmaking in Pakistan, she said. The minister sought support from German institutions for technical training in film, art, and culture for Pakistani students. "Film, art and culture can be promoted by cooperation between German and Pakistani private educational institutions," she said. The minister appreciated the services of German NGOs GIZ and Hans Seidel Foundation in Pakistan. She also expressed her gratitude for the



German assistance of 18.4 million Euros to the flood victims in Pakistan. Germany's promise to provide 84 million euros in aid to the International Conference on Climate Change was another proof of Germany's friendship with Pakistan, the minister maintained. The volume of bilateral trade is 4 billion dollars which needs to be increased, said the

minister. She opined and Allama Iqbal and Goethe were common assets between the two countries and with the establishment of Iqbal-Goethe Art and Culture Center in Berlin, the people of the two countries will come closer to each other. She appreciated the German media for reporting the situation in Pakistan in an objective and impartial manner which was

commendable. A delegation of the German Journalists Association was expected to visit Pakistan next month, the minister told the German Ambassador. In the meeting, matters of mutual interests and increasing bilateral cooperation were discussed. The German Ambassador appreciated the efforts of the Information Minister for the promotion of film and culture.

**SC to take up JJ's petition on Panama Papers**

ISLAMABAD: A two-member bench of the Supreme Court will take up a petition filed by Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Ameer Sirajul Haq on June 9 seeking an investigation against all the Pakistanis named in Panama Papers. A bench comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan will hear the case - filed in August 2016 - next week. The JI chief had asked the court to investigate all the 436 Pakistanis whose names are mentioned in the Panama Papers. In April 2016, some 200, and later on 400 more people, were figured in the Panama Papers. They included businessmen and politicians from Pakistan, including the members of Premier Nawaz Sharif's family accused of setting up offshore companies in the tax havens. Notices have been issued to Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan and others made a party in the petition. - DNA

**Shelling in Russian border region kills two: Governor**

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Two women have been killed in shelling in the Russian border region of Belgorod, its governor says. In Belgorod, Mr Gladkov said two more people travelling in another car had been wounded in the shelling. One of the most prominent anti-Kremlin paramilitary groups said it had been engaging in military operations in the nearby village of Novaya Tavolzhanka. The Freedom of Russian Legion (FRL) said two civilians had been killed after the Russian artillery mistook their vehicle for a car containing FRL members. Neither claim has been inde-

pendently verified. Long-range drones also hit two towns in the Smolensk region, the local governor there said, while the Kaluga region's head said an explosion had been reported in a forest. Recent weeks have seen an increase in cross border attacks. On Thursday eight people were wounded in shelling in Belgorod and the latest strikes come more than a week after one of the most significant cross-border raids since the war began. On Friday Ukrainian officials said air defences had shot down about 30 missiles and drones

fired by Russia. Russia has launched more than 20 missile and drone attacks on Ukraine over the past month. Speaking from Helsinki on Friday, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken called Russia's invasion of Ukraine "a strategic failure". America's top diplomat was speaking during a visit to Finland, Nato's newest member, as part of a series of trips to several Nordic countries. He said the invasion had weakened Russia diplomatically, economically and militarily while strengthening the European Union, Nato and Ukrainian national identity.



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador Dr. Mehmet Pacaci bids farewell to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif upon his departure for Turkiye. - DNA

**US Congress averts default, approves debt-limit suspension**

WASHINGTON: The U.S. Senate on Thursday passed bipartisan legislation backed by President Joe Biden that lifts the government's \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling, averting what would have been a first-ever default. The Senate voted 63-36 to approve the bill that had been passed on Wednesday by the House of Representatives, as lawmakers raced against the clock following months of partisan bickering between Democrats and Republicans. The Treasury Department had warned it would be unable to pay all its bills on June 5 if Congress failed to act by then. "We are avoiding default tonight," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Thursday as he steered the legislation through his 100-member chamber. Biden praised Congress' timely action. "This bipartisan agreement is a big win for our economy and the American people," the Democratic president said in a statement, adding that he will sign it into law as soon as possible. He said he would make an additional statement on Friday at 7 p.m. EDT (2300 GMT). Biden was directly involved in negotiations on the bill with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. While this bitter battle has ended, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell wasted no time flagging the next budget fight. "In the coming months, Senate Republicans will continue working to provide for the common defense and control Washington Democrats' reckless spending," he said in a statement. McConnell was referring to 12 bills Congress will work on over the summer to fund government programs in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, which will also carry out the broad instructions of the debt limit bill. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, meanwhile, issued some pointed advice saying, "I continue to strongly believe that the full faith and credit of the United States must never be used as a bargaining chip," as Republicans did over the past several months. - Agencies

**Drug traffickers smuggling past South Asia - UN**

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Drug traffickers have found new ways of smuggling crystal methamphetamine, known as ice, out of South East Asia to high-paying customers outside the region, according to a UN report. Criminal gangs are moving more drugs by sea to evade land patrols in Thailand and China, making them harder to spot. They have learnt "to anticipate, adapt and try to circumvent" law enforcement, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said. The ice is sold in Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. The huge trade in methamphetamines and other illegal drugs, which mostly flow from super labs in parts of Myanmar, is also showing no signs of slowing down, the UN agency warned. Shan state in Myanmar is home to what many believe is the world's largest meth trade. Traffickers ship the drugs out through the borders of Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, an area known as the Golden Triangle. "In 2022, we saw them work around Thai borders more than in the past," said Jeremy Douglas, the UN agency's regional representative.

**US, Taiwan sign trade deal over China's opposition**

WASHINGTON: The United States signed a trade agreement Thursday with Taiwan over opposition from China, which claims the self-ruled island democracy as part of its territory. The two governments say the U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade will strengthen commercial relations by improving customs, investment and other regulation. The measure was signed by employees of the unofficial entities that maintain relations between the United States and Taiwan, a center for high-tech industry. They have no formal diplomatic ties but maintain unofficial relations and have billions of dollars in annual trade. The agreement is intended to "strengthen and deepen the economic and trade relationship," the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative said in a statement. The deputy USTR, Sarah Bianchi, attended the signing. The Chinese government accused Washington of violating agreements of violating agreements on Taiwan's status and demanded the U.S. government stop official contact with the island's elected government. - Agencies

**Over 36000 Pakistani pilgrims arrive in Saudi**

STAFF REPORT

RIYADH: Over 36000 Pakistani intending pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia. Out of these, 28000 are staying in Madinah while other 8000 have arrived in Makkah after completing their eight-day stay in Madinah. Radio Pakistan's correspondent Javed Iqbal reports from Makkah that Pakistan Hajj Mission has deployed over 100 Haram Guides to assist pilgrims at entrance, exit points of Masjid Al Haram. These dedicated Haram guides, proudly displaying Pakistani flags and sporting distinctive green caps and vests, are strategically positioned at various entrances of the Grand Mosque. The primary role of the Haram guides is to provide valuable assistance and guidance to the pilgrims, ensuring that they are directed towards the buses that will take them comfortably to their assigned accommodations. To ensure maximum convenience for the pilgrims, the buses for each sector are strategically stationed at designated locations.

**Role of FETPs in disease prevention discussed**

The main aim of the session was to highlight the crucial role of Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) in disease surveillance, prevention, and control

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP), National Institutes of Health (NIH) Islamabad in collaboration with Japan-FETP, organized a special online session on the "Role of FETPs in Disease Surveillance and Prevention / Control of Diseases". This session was originally initiated with the good communication and collaboration between Pakistan Center for Disease Control (CDC) of NIH and Embassy of Japan in Islamabad during the challenging time of COVID-19. The main aim of the session was to highlight the crucial role of Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) in disease surveillance, prevention, and control. As FETPs are designed to train public health professionals in the field of epidemiology and enabling them to support the development and enhancement of surveillance systems for timely detection and reporting of diseases. Mr. Hitoshi Kikawada, a member of the House of Representatives of Japan and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, former State Minister of Cabinet office in charge of Policies against COV-

ID-19, was the chief guest of the session. Fellows from the FETPs, health experts, partners also attended. In his video message, Mr. Kikawada, stated that we have faced pandemic of COVID-19 for more than three years and have under-

stood that infectious diseases have changed our economies and societies dramatically and overcoming infectious diseases has become one of the most important issue of the human beings. He also said that Japan has dealt with COVID-19 successful-

ly. Japan has contributed in the universal healthcare with ODA for a long time and through these experiences, Japan can play more active role in medical areas in Asia. In this sense it is wonderful that Japan and Pakistan have been working in these medical areas, he mentioned. During the session, representative from CDC Pakistan and Dr. Tomimasa Sunagawa, MD Director, Center of Field Epidemic Intelligence, Research and Professional Development, National Institute of Infectious Diseases in Japan gave lectures, focusing on disease outbreak investigation and the strengthening of the surveillance system for the timely detection and reporting of infections. They also emphasised the significance of tracking disease trends and implementing prompt interventions and preventative measures. Talking about the Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs), they added that these programs promote collaboration among various stakeholders, including public health agencies, academic institutions, and international organizations. By training epidemiologists and supporting surveillance activities, FETPs help build resilient health systems capable of responding to disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies.

